

# Albanian Support Project

## The Trust for Developing Communities

### January – May 2023

**Background.** The Trust for Developing Communities (TDC) has been delivering targeted Community Development with Albanians in Brighton & Hove for the past 2 years. TDC employ an Albanian Community Engagement Worker, called Sonila Deda, who was originally recruited with Home Office support direct from Edrin Gjoni, National Community Engagement Lead for Albania.

At the end of 2022, TDC were approached to support delivery against the aims of the Sussex Police Serious Organised Crime Community Coordination project. Delivery on the project was to span January to June 2023.

### Overview

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TDC were awarded £129,000 to deliver work in support of Albanians in the city of Brighton & Hove. This was split into three main strands: support for Albanian Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children, Albanian Youth Work, and Albanian Community Development Support. The report below summarises progress against these workstreams.

### Albanian Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

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Albanian UASC housed in a Hove hotel had been systematically going missing within a very short amount of time of their arrival at the hotel. The intention of this workstream was to establish a specialised youth work offer at the hotel in order to enhance the scaffolding of safeguarding support and increase the wellbeing of resident children. Our hope was also to provide a positive early experience of the UK as a welcoming humanitarian country, and of Brighton as a city of sanctuary. This, in turn, was hoped to reduce the numbers of Albanian children who went missing in future.

This project required a great deal of preparation to mobilise, including desk top research and meetings with relevant organisations already working in this space. These organisations include:

- [BHCC](#), International Migration Manager - Lucy Bryson
- [BHCC](#), UASC Social Work Pod Manager – Jo Watts
- [The Hummingbird Refugee Project](#), Founder & Director – Elaine Ortiz
- [Audio Active](#), Director of programmes - Michelle Hunter
- [Brighton & Hove Sanctuary on Sea](#), Schools of Sanctuary Lead – Angie Lynn
- [St. John of God](#), Modern Day Slavery and Trafficking Service Manager – Bianca Guerra
- [Conversation over Borders](#) – Aine Cassidy
- [Sutton & District Training](#), Centre Manager – Alice Wallman
- [BHCC](#), Exploitation & Violence Reduction Coordinator - Tom Bennett
- [HERA / Robin Hood Health Foundation](#), Director – Emma Drew
- [Poplar HARCA](#), Strategic Community Engagement Manager - Nahim Ahmed
- [Breadwinners](#), Brighton Manager – Antonia Gillett
- [Brighton Table Tennis Club](#), Founder Director – Tim Holtam
- [HERA / Robin Hood Health Foundation](#), Social Prescribing Lead – Lizzy West

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- [Hope for Justice](#), Training Specialist – Ruth Packwood
- [Belltree Music Therapy CIC](#), Services Coordinator – Catherine Mitchell

Connections were made with, and information gathered from other service providers in the city, including [Migrant English Project](#), [Sussex Interpreting Services](#), [Vandu Languages](#), [Hangleton & Knoll Project](#), [Refugee Radio](#).

The following offer was subsequently built:

**Positive Activities** – A programme of enriching activities would be required to augment the existing offer (e.g. Belltree Arts Therapy). TDC have organised/scoped:

- **Regular youth work sessions** in the hotel delivered by trained, experienced TDC youth work staff. These staff are to be regularly supported by trauma-informed clinical supervision, group reflective practice and an ongoing training programme.
- **English language lessons** – It was communicated by the Head of Safeguarding at Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) that the educational offer in the hotel was minimal and should be enhanced where at all possible. English, maths, and orientation to the UK could play a part in this offer. As a result, TDC have purchased **English language learning resources** and identified online teaching/learning resources, and trained staff in their use.
- [Sussex County Cricket Club](#) will be providing **free tickets to a match** in May for the children in the hotel.
- **Various resources and games** purchased for the hotel sessions, e.g., spike ball and tie-die.
- **Eat Make Play training** to inform learning in how to use the [Human Hive's Patchwork Education model](#) to transform any skill into an inclusive activity.
- Local charity [AudioActive](#) to deliver **music production sessions** that will incorporate basic **English and maths learning** elements.
- [Robin Hood Health Foundation](#) to deliver **arts-based activities**, e.g. dance & movement, creative arts, photography.
- Continuation of the [Belltree music therapy](#) service who are running out of resource to continue their offer in the hotel of one session per week.
- A **garden growing project**, based on therapeutic principles of growing and connection to nature.

The TDC Project Manager has continued gathering info of local support provision through networking with these organisations and key professionals locally, and [Hope for Justice](#) nationally. They have been regularly attending multi-agency meetings (Kent Overflow; Refugee & Migrant Forum, B&H Migrant Support Network) and two [City of Sanctuary](#) workshops themed around 'supporting people in hotels'. This will ensure TDC's community-based offer is complimentary and of value, whilst identifying potential collaboration opportunities and ensure the team know where they can refer children/young people, to address specific needs. Landscape mapping and systems/operational learning from this process will be summarised in an 'Insight Report', questions that require further investigation will be raised, and recommendations offered.

**Other Support** – TDC have been working on other forms of support for the Albanian UASC in the hotel, including:

- **100 free SIM cards from Vodafone**. These have been received and each come with 40GB data each month plus unlimited calls and texts for a period of 6 months. These will be

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provided to Albanian and other asylum-seeking children in the hotel, and Albanian children/young people in local authority care.

- **Welcome/care packs** to distribute to the children as they arrive in the UASC hotel. These packs may include basic underwear, alarm clocks to support healthy sleep routines, SIM cards (as above), condoms and creative materials.
- Scoping a **film with settled Albanians in the Albanian language** to show to Albanian children upon arrival at the hotel, dispelling myths they might have been told as part of their potential grooming.

The Hotel in-reach work has been delayed due to the stand down of the Home Office UASC hotel. We are ready to start delivery as soon as the hotel re-opens. We are in weekly contact with the hotel to ensure we receive prompt communication when the hotel is operational again.

Coaching for the UASC was part of TDC's original proposal, but it became clear that the children would not usually be present in the hotel for long enough or have the requisite English language skills for this offer to be impactful here. Instead, TDC's 'New View' Youth coaching/mentoring has been made available to 11–17-year-old settled/fostered Albanians via referral. Info and referral process has been sent to local agencies.

## Albanian Youth Work

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Youth Work methodology builds sustained relationships with young people which, in turn, facilitates personal, social and economic developments, include health improvements. By developing an offer of Youth Work for young Albanians in the city it is hoped that we can support them to meet a wide range of needs and build cohesion between them and the wider community.

Initial engagement activities are required in order to make first contact. TDC's Albanian Community Development Worker had previously witnessed positive engagement with sporting activities, namely boxing and football. Partners were subsequently engaged to establish and deliver regular sessions that could be sustained beyond the end of the financial year.

The Youth work offer also included the purchase and refit of a 'mobile youth bus' as an asset that could be taken to sessions once they are established and even potentially brought to support Hotel session.

TDC also planned to investigate leadership training opportunities for local young Albanians.

### The sports offer:

- **Boxing** - Weekly boxing sessions started on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2023, and will continue each on Saturday from 3.30-4.30pm. The sessions are marketed towards mixed genders and the project will be delivered by a bilingual Albanian boxing coach, supporting the potential engagement from not just settled Albanians but also those being housed in the hotel as UASC.

The maximum group size is currently 10, age range is 12-16s (subject to change). Sessions will run weekly through to August 2023. Subject to demand a second series of weekly session will hopefully be organised.

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STARTING 25TH OF MARCH FOR  
ALBANIAN COMMUNITY  
AGES 12-17



FREE BOXING CLUB EVERY SATURDAY 3.30- 4.30  
AT FISHERSGATE BOXING CLUB  
CARLTON TERRACE,  
BRIGHTON BN41 1XF  
CONTACT: SONILADEDA@TRUSTDEVCOM.ORG.UK

So far , 6 young people have taken part in boxing sessions. They continue to gain skills, confidence and community connections through the sessions.

- **Football** - 13 x 2hr football sessions to be delivered with Albion in the Community on Wednesdays weekly 3.30-5.30pm between 19 April and 19 July 2023 in Hove Park with 2 qualified football coaches and up to 32 Albanian young people aged 12-17 years. Supporting a strong delivery partner, such as Albion in the Community, to deliver these will ensure robust safeguarding practices are in place.

We have had a total of 15 young people attending and have delivered 6 sessions. (mainly from 4 families). Total of 12 hours delivered – with 59 attendances \* 2 hours =118 hours of contact. 6 girls and 9 boys (40% female participation). Age range from 6 – 13

As well as the retention and the continuing new attendance evidencing that the young people are enjoying the sessions the following sentence was cut from an email from Sonila.

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“Tony (football coach), had really good feedback from one of the mums. She said it has really helped with her daughter’s confidence. Well done!!”



### **The Youth Bus:**

Mobile units are a tried and tested method for enhancing youth engagement in public places and at events. Their bright colours are attractive and memorable for young people who start to recognise the service as a reputation is built across the city. It was felt that the Albanian youth support offer could be enhanced in multiple ways through the purchase of a mobile unit and that a resource such as this could continue to be an asset beyond the end of the financial year and for many years to come.

TDC have purchased a new Vauxhall Movano Long Wheel-based van and the requisite customisation, including graffiti art spray job. Young people were involved in a widespread consultation on the design of the bus, including young Albanians. The findings have been shared with the 2 artists who will be spray painting the bus, they will translate young people’s ideas and messages, and will submit 4 design options for consideration.



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## Youth Leadership:

Young Albanians living in Brighton & Hove will be invited to join TDC's 'Be the Change' Youth Leadership course. This will be targeted to the settled community and those in local authority care, once a trusted relationship has been developed with a youth worker or youth coach. The course develops young people to become assistant youth workers. For young people interested in a campaigning, lobbying and influencing role, TDC will signpost them to [Hummingbird's Young Leaders project](#).

The TDC Project Manager is exploring how local Albanian children/young people can get involved in the [Home Office's Young People's Board](#).

## Albanian Community Development Support

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TDC's Albanian Community Engagement Worker, Sonila Deda, has deepened support to the [Albanians in Sussex](#) (AiS) community group. This has involved strengthening the committee and holding a series of meetings to review the group's infrastructure, including their website and Facebook (the main means of engagement and communication for the local Albanian population). This support has provided a strong foundation for work to develop beyond the end of the funding period.

Activity to date includes:

- 170 members of AiS attended the Independence Day event, with a notable increase in young people attending over previous years
- 5 individuals are now proactive members of the AiS Committee, supporting the governance, financial management, communication and planning of events
- 25 new Albanians have been directly engaged by projects organised by AiS
- 2 families have been engaged for support in obtaining an EHCP (An Education, Health and Care plan is a legal document which describes a child or young person's special educational needs, the support they need, and the outcomes they would like to achieve.)
- 11 Albanians were consulted as part of a wider Neighbourhood Action Plan process, hearing and including their views in future plans for parts of the city.
- The AiS Facebook group has reached over 2,000 members. The last couple of months had more interactions and request from individuals in regards of promoting work opportunities, new boxing club sessions and general information.
- A family event on 14<sup>th</sup> March for Albanian families in partnership with BHCC [Ethnic Minority Achievement Service \(EMAS\)](#), held at Jubilee Library.
- Much improved contact with [Sussex Interpreting Services \(SIS\)](#) who have been supporting Albanian community with interpreting. Their details have been added to the Albanian in Sussex website for future support, and links with community in general.
- New communication through posters requesting help with future projects i.e. culture and heritage engaging families and young adults.
- Resourcing of £6,000 has been passed directly to the AiS community group, which will support self-determined activity over the coming year.

Development work with the AiS community group has included and will continue to include support in the fundraising capacity of the group. This will help to embed sustainability and growth in the strength and power of this group.

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Sonila is also investigating the possibility of instigating a peer-support group for parents who have recently migrated to Brighton & Hove. Sonila's other paid employment local in a nursery setting has demonstrated a need and willing for such a supportive space.

## Recommendations

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1. **Enhancing the Community Development support for local Albanians** – To increase the existing worker's capacity to full-time would drastically increase the amount of support for local Albanian communities and accelerate relationship growth.
2. **Continuation of some of the primed delivery** – Some of the activity which has already received some resource to set up would require relatively smaller levels of funding to be sustained. To continue to invest in the Youth Bus, and youth sports elements could ensure that relationships and project profile is not compromised by a transition of funding arrangements.
3. **UASC Hotel delivery** – The hotel in Hove is likely to be in use again soon. A prospectus offer to organisations could be commissioned in partnership to ensure a welcoming, educational and enriching array of activity was in place to give young Albanians the best chance for choosing to stay in the care of the Home Office until they are housed.
4. **Networking & Co-ordination** –By providing a supportive networking and coordination function, any new arrangements for UASC Albanians could be enhanced and developed, and safeguarding (in particular from going missing) can be addressed to the fullest extent.
5. **Sector Development** – There appears to be a need for the community of organisations supporting UASC in Brighton & Hove to be better connected and supported themselves. This would need careful consideration so that these organisations would welcome this additional help and recognise the potential benefits in terms of increased strategic approach, fundraising, communication etc.
6. **Recommendations 3 & 4** – Could be delivered as one post.
7. **Albanian Language Communication** - Create info posters in Albanian (and other languages) that explain what human trafficking, modern slavery and criminal exploitation are, the grooming tactics of OCGs and the reality (is this happening to you?), and (are you scare or worried?) who you can talk to and trust / where you can go for help.
8. **Youth Led Projects** - Scope ideas for and support the delivery of youth-led projects that promote integration and multiculturalism, bringing local young people together with young asylum seekers / UASC.